

**To:** Hamilton, Karen[Hamilton.Karen@epa.gov]; R8 GKM Leadership Team[R8\_GKM\_LeadershipTeam@epa.gov]  
**From:** StClair, Christie  
**Sent:** Wed 5/18/2016 5:30:13 PM  
**Subject:** RE: GKM site update - send comments NLT 1pm EST tomorrow

Karen, appreciate you bringing this up. I've updated it in the copy we'll post on the site.

**Christie St. Clair**

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**From:** Hamilton, Karen  
**Sent:** Monday, May 16, 2016 4:12 PM  
**To:** StClair, Christie <StClair.Christie@epa.gov>; R8 GKM Leadership Team <R8\_GKM\_LeadershipTeam@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: GKM site update - send comments NLT 1pm EST tomorrow

I know this question is too late for this effort, but please clarify whether we continue to avoid the word "spill."

**From:** StClair, Christie  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 12, 2016 2:29 PM  
**To:** R8 GKM Leadership Team <R8\_GKM\_LeadershipTeam@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** GKM site update - send comments NLT 1pm EST tomorrow

We are updating the homepage and FAQs section for the GKM site. Below are draft instructions for the web team.

All content comes from previously approved language. Please feel free to edit anything you'd like --- just clearly note your edits.

This is also going to Rs 6 and 9, OLEM/OSRTI, ORD, OW, and then OGC.

Please send any edits by 1pm Eastern tomorrow.

Thanks,

Christie

### **Homepage**

1. Delete all info in top section starting with "To date EPA has/is:" through "A person may amend the claim at any time prior to reaching a settlement with the EPA."

### **FAQs page**

1. Move the current FAQs to a section with a rule above it. At the top, insert this text:

This section is no longer being updated. Please see FAQs at the top of this page for current information.

2. Insert new FAQs at top of page. At the top, insert this text:

Updated May X, 2016

3. Insert new FAQs:

**What is EPA doing to address the financial needs of the states, tribes and local governments impacted by the spill?**

To date, EPA has:

- [REDACTED] Allocated \$2 million in funding to support states' and tribes' long-term monitoring plans. Utah, New Mexico, Southern Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Navajo Nation, and Colorado are eligible and may apply those funds to spring monitoring and preparedness planning as well. Some entities have applied and some have not.
- [REDACTED] Agreed to contribute an additional \$600,000, which in combination with the prior \$2 million in funding, will enable states and tribes to fund a real time water quality monitoring alert system in the upper Animas area above Silverton to assess contributions from Cement Creek, Mineral Creek and the upper Animas, as well as above Durango and below the confluence of Mineral Creek and the Animas River. This real-time monitoring would also serve to ensure successful coordination and implementation of notification and preparedness activities for communities downstream.
- [REDACTED] Provided \$197,792 to La Plata County through a pre-existing cooperative agreement with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). These funds were a reimbursement for the County's allowable removal response expenses related to the Gold King Mine release. EPA is in the process of evaluating over \$140,000 in additional expenses requested by La Plata County prior to October 31, 2015, and expects to reimburse allowable response costs under the existing cooperative agreement.
- [REDACTED] Provided \$220,667 to San Juan County/Town of Silverton through a pre-existing cooperative agreement with CDPHE. These funds were reimbursement for the county's and town's allowable removal response expenses related to the Gold King Mine-related release.
- [REDACTED] Provided \$9,786 to La Plata through a Superfund Cooperative Agreement awarded on April 1, 2016. EPA is in the process of evaluating over \$140,000 in additional expenses requested by La Plata County prior to October 31, 2015, and expects to reimburse allowable response costs under the existing cooperative agreement soon.
- [REDACTED] Provided \$2,471 to the City of Durango through a Superfund Cooperative Agreement awarded on April 1, 2016.
- [REDACTED] Provided \$157,000 in funding through a cooperative agreement with Navajo Nation government

agencies for costs incurred during the response to the August 2015 Gold King Mine release, and requested additional information from the Navajo Nation about remaining reimbursement requests to determine their eligibility under the EPA's response authorities and federal grant principles. These funds are in addition to more than \$1.1 million spent by the agency in response costs on the Navajo Nation immediately following the spill.

- Reimbursed the Southern Ute Indian Tribe \$116,372 for costs incurred during the response.
- Reimbursed the New Mexico Environment Department for \$334,064 for costs incurred during the response. EPA is working with the New Mexico Environment Department to review additional requests for response costs following the state's request for an extension.
- Received a reimbursement request for approximately \$303,500 from the State of Colorado, CDPHE, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Response and \$128,305 from the State of Utah, Department of Environmental Quality.

### **How can individuals, businesses or governmental entities file a claim for reimbursement?**

Individuals, businesses or governmental entities that believe they have suffered money damages resulting from personal injury, property damage or economic loss caused by negligent or wrongful U.S. government actions may file a claim with the EPA under the Federal Tort Claims Act for injury or damage. The EPA has posted claim forms and processing information on our website at <https://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/claims-process-and-standard-form-95-damage-injury-or-death-result-gold-king-mine> and claims may be submitted to [R8\\_GKM\\_Claims@epa.gov](mailto:R8_GKM_Claims@epa.gov) or by mail. To date, no determination has been made regarding claims submitted to the EPA.

As a general matter, claims must be presented to the EPA within two years after the claim accrues.

A person may amend the claim at any time prior to reaching a settlement with the EPA.

### **Can you put the amount of water from the Gold King release in perspective?**

The Gold King Mine release on Aug. 5, 2015 released approximately 3 million gallons of water from the mine adit. In comparison, roughly 5.4 million gallons per day of adit flow discharges from the 48 historic mines/mining-related sources in the Bonita Peak Mining District.

### **How did the spill affect the environment and human safety?**

Surface water has returned to pre-event conditions based on data gathered after the Gold King Mine incident. Water quality does not exceed recreational screening levels for human exposure.

However, EPA's 2014 Draft Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment (BERA) found that metals emanating from Cement Creek pose severe risks to the aquatic environment for several miles below the mining district. Lesser impairment of the aquatic community is likely to be occurring for at least 30 miles downstream of Silverton.

It is these and other documented environmental impacts that have led EPA to seek the addition of the Bonita Peak Mining District to the NPL. By proposing the site to the NPL, additional data will be collected to more fully characterize sources of metals to the Animas River outside of the Cement Creek drainage and to assess risks to human health and the environment.

### **Are there any safety precautions for people who live, play or work near the affected waterways?**

EPA, the state of Colorado and local health authorities continue to caution that there may be higher concentrations of metals in discolored sediment/soil.

People living, playing and working near the affected waterways should avoid discolored sediment/soil. Children under age 6 should be supervised when playing in and around the river to ensure they don't ingest river water or sediment.

As always, untreated water should not be ingested from creeks, streams or rivers.

If people see any unusual discharges from mines, contact local officials immediately.

### **What screening values are being used for water and sediment/soil?**

EPA is using conservative recreational screening levels for water that assume that adults and children receive all of their daily water intake (2 liters/day) from the river over a 64 day period. Screening levels for soil/sediment assume that adults and children receive their daily soil intake over a 64-day period.

### **How did the spill affect local wildlife?**

On September 1, 2015, CDPHE issued a fact sheet with the following statement: "The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recommends that eating trout from the Animas River at this time is considered safe. CDPHE analyzed fish tissue from rainbow and brown trout from the Animas River. Based on the limited samples available, most of the post (Gold King) event fish tissue analyzed showed metals below detectable levels and all results fall below risk screening levels. Because there is a potential for the fish to concentrate metals in their tissue over time, CDPHE and CPW will continue to monitor levels of metals in Animas River fish. New data will be analyzed and the results will be reported when available."

### **Will the EPA monitor the water as sediment is kicked up during spring run-off?**

Yes, EPA plans to monitor before, during, and after spring run-off to capture water quality conditions during those flow events. Seasonal run-off and storm events routinely increase the sediment load, as observed historically. The sampling is being done in accordance with the Conceptual Monitoring Plan. Learn more about the monitoring plan here. <https://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/final-conceptual-monitoring-plan>

### **What is the status of the Interim Water Treatment Plant located at Gladstone, Colorado?**

The interim water treatment plant installed at Gladstone in November 2015 is treating ongoing acid mine drainage being discharged from the Gold King Mine. The plant has operated over the winter, with removal work resuming this summer.

EPA is evaluating the options for operation of the interim water treatment plant beyond November 2016. Decisions related to water treatment will be made in the context of the cleanup options identified during the Superfund Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study process.

### **What are the next steps for the Gold King Mine site?**

Response operations at the Gold King Mine will resume as early as possible in the late spring/early summer, dependent upon road conditions and any remaining avalanche hazards around the mine (which can extend into May)

The Gold King Mine is one of 48 mining sites in the Bonita Peak Mining District, which the agency recently proposed to be added to the National Priorities List.

R8 please add more info here if needed.

#### **What are the next steps regarding a Superfund listing?**

The Gold King Mine is one of 48 mining sites in the Bonita Peak Mining District, which the agency recently proposed to be added to the National Priorities List. After a public comment period, the agency may choose to finalize the site's p to the NPL list.

The remedial investigation is the first step in the process of getting a site cleaned-up once a site has been placed on the NPL.

R8 or OSRTI please add more info here if needed.

#### **How much will cleanup cost if the Bonita Peak Mining District is added to the NPL?**

At this point, it is too early to estimate clean-up cost. Additional site characterization is necessary prior to considering cleanup options and associated costs.

#### **What did EPA do to support Navajo Nation after the incident?**

EPA's deployment to the Navajo Nation following the August 5 Gold King Mine release was extensive. EPA Region 9 alone deployed over 30 personnel, the majority of whom were at the Incident Command Post (ICP) in Farmington, New Mexico. The Farmington ICP ran operations for sampling on the San Juan River and delivery of hay and water on Navajo Nation. EPA provided nearly 8,500 bales of hay to Navajo communities along the San Juan River. EPA and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (supported by EPA funding) provided over one million gallons of livestock and agricultural water to farmers and ranchers on the Navajo Nation. The agency spent more than \$1.1 million on these response costs on the Navajo Nation immediately following the spill.

The agency has provided \$157,000 in funding through a cooperative agreement with Navajo Nation government agencies for costs incurred during the response to the August 2015 Gold King Mine release, and requested additional information from the Navajo Nation about remaining reimbursement requests to determine their eligibility under the EPA's response authorities and federal grant principles.

Navajo Nation is also eligible to apply for a portion of \$2.6 million in grant funds, which the agency has allocated to the affected states and tribes to support real-time water monitoring.

EPA continues to sample water and sediment/soil along the San Juan river as part of the conceptual monitoring plan. Learn more about the monitoring plan here. <https://www.epa.gov/goldkingmine/final-conceptual-monitoring-plan>

**Christie St. Clair**

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